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ABSTRACT

This curriculum outline, designed for use in U.S. history, world history, or English courses, presents information about Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust. Part 1 provides a rationale for teaching about this subject, while part 2 presents an outline of historical information from 1887 to 1934 concerning Hitler's life and the rise of the Nazi Party. Part 3 outlines the Holocaust in terms of: (1) the roots of European anti-Semitism; (2) the persecution of Jews from 1933-1938 through use of the established legal system; (3) the intensification of Jewish persecution from 1938 to 1940 by legal and extra-legal means; and (4) the physical destruction of European Jews from 1941 to 1945. Part 4 contains a 20-item partially annotated bibliography. (JHP)

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HITLER

AND

THE HOLOCAUST

Senior High School
U.S. History
World History
English

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RATIONALE FOR TEACHING HITLER AND THE HOLOCAUST

In the study of the Holocaust and related studies, teachers need to approach this unit with sensitivity and competence. Before teaching the Holocaust, teachers should understand clearly their reasons for incorporating such a unit into the curriculum. The teacher's rationale for including such a unit may be an effective vehicle for introducing this topic to high school students.

Based on teacher preference, a rationale/introduction may include the following:

1) Recent events which demonstrate a continuing interest in Hitler, Nazi Germany, and the Holocaust (e.g. the 1985 exhumation of Dr. Joseph Mengele's remains, the 1986 election of Kurt Waldheim, the forged diaries of Adolf Hitler and the recent "discovery" of his World War I photo album);

2) Resurgence of groups motivated by intense nationalism and desire for racial purity;

3) Apparent willingness of people to follow uncritically those who offer easy solutions to complicated problems (e.g. Jim Jones and the Peoples' Temple and popular cult groups);

4) The moral dilemma which exist when men violate their conscience and system of ethics (e.g. peer pressure and the unwillingness of people to become involved with individuals and issues).

The value of the Holocaust to the learner depends on the extent of one's search for understanding - not only the Nazi regime and the destruction of millions of people, but also one's own personal value system.

HITLER AND THE HOLOCAUST: A TEACHER'S OUTLINE

I. Hitler - The Early Years: 1889-1903

A. Family Background

1. Alois Schicklgruber, Hitler's father, born to unmarried peasant woman in 1837

a. Becomes successful and respectful Austrian civil servant, collecting customs duties at border posts

b. Changes his name to Hitler in 1876, for reasons which are unclear

c. Marries his third wife, Klara Polzl, in 1885

d. Dies of celebral hemorrhage in 1903

2. Klara Polzl, Hitler's mother, leads life of obscurity until she marries her second cousin, Alois Hitler, after receiving papal dispensation

a. Devout Catholic who lives for God and her family, raising her children in the tenets of the Church

b. Gives birth to Adolf, her fourth child, after having seen first three children die in infancy or childhood

B. Adolf Hitler - Birth and Childhood

1. Born at half past six in the evening of April 20, 1887, in Brannon am Inn, an Austrian border town where Alois collected customs duties

2. Sickly at birth and into childhood, resulting in Klara's becoming overprotective, prone to spoil her son

3. Led routine childhood from all accounts by friends and family, although rumors persist that Alois subjected his family to mental and physical abuse

4. Performed well in school until 1900, when his grades plummeted and he developed an anti-intellectualism which would last the rest of his life

5. Leaves school in 1905 at age of 16 and applies for admission to Vienna Art Academy, only to fail the exam in 1907 and be refused the right to take it over in 1908

6. Heartbroken by the death of his mother in 1907 from cancer

7. Blames Jewish professors for his failure on the art exam and Jewish doctor for Klara's painful death

II. Hitler - Years of Wandering and Fulfillment: 1908-1919

A. Moves to Vienna in 1908 and begins five year period of living in "flop houses," subsisting on meager income from odd jobs and painting post cards

B. Begins to develop "gift" for oratory, frequently haranguing residents of flop houses where he lives

C. Collects and reads anti-Semitie literature, formulating his own ideas on the "Jew" which will later find expression in the national life of Germany

D. Flees Vienna in 1913 to avoid service in Austrian military and takes up residence in Munich, Germany

E. Inducted into the Germany army in August, 1914, and becomes a dispatch runner (a lance corporal in rank) during World War I

F. Serves with some distinction and receives the Iron Cross, first and second class

G. Becomes espionage agent for German military after war's end, checking on the many political parties which might threaten stability of Weimer Rupublic, Germany's democratic government after the war

III. Political Awakening and Consolidation: 1919-1933

A. Attend meeting of German Workers Party in September, 1919, as espionage agent

1. Impresses members of party with his fervor during impassioned speech he suddenly makes and is invited to join

2. Becomes a card-carrying member in 1920 and soon becomes a prominent figure, leading the party to increase its membership to 3,000

B. Emerges as "Fuhrer," Leader of the party

1. Orders the name changed to National Socialist (from which we derive the word "Nazi") German Worker's Party

2. Threatens to resign in July, 1921, unless he is given absolute power

C. Attempts armed revolution in Munich - November 9, 1923

1. Fails due to inadequate planning and over-estimation of his power

2. Arrested and tried for treason

3. Sentenced to five years in Landsburg Prison, but released after nine months due to governmental weakness

D. Revives the sagging Nazi Party and publishes his autobiographical study and blueprint for power, Mein Kampf (My Struggle)

E. Appointed Chancellor by President Paul von Hindenburg, believing he could control the "little corporal"

F. Secures from Hindenburg an emergency decree granting Hitler the power to prohibit public meetings, to suppress publications, and to outlaw newspapers dangerous to the state

G. Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933, reportedly set by unbalanced Dutchman, actually set by Nazis as pretext to suppress civil liberties (with resulting abolition of free speech, assembly, press, and privacy of the mails and telephone conservations)

H. Secures on March 23, 1933, the "Law for the Relief of the Distress of the People and the Reich," authorizing the Nazi-controlled government to use extra-constitutional powers for the next four years

I. Nation-wide "burning of books" signifying the Nazi attack on freedom of thought--May 20, 1933

J. Outlawing of all political parties except the Nazi Party on July 14, 1933

K. Opposition within and without the party broken by violent blood punge, "Night of the Long Knives," in which more than 500 people die

L. Consolidation of total power as Hitler appoints himself "Fuhrer" of all Germany, while retaining the office of Chancellor, upon the death of Hindenburg on August 1, 1934

Thus, by the summer of 1934, the World War I corporal had "legally" become absolute master of Germany's millions.

THE HOLOCAUST

I. Roots of European Anti-Semitism

A. Religious teachings contrary to Christianity

1. Opposite concept of role of Jesus
2. Jews viewed as "Christ-Killers"
3. Martin Luther's suggestions

a. Restrict and/or prohibit Jewish presence in communities
b. Remove Jews from communities by
1. Physical abuse and threats of violence
2. Destruction of homes and communities
3. Physical extermination of Jews, if necessary

B. Social, political and economic prejudice against Jews

1. Periodic pograms against Jew communities
2. Higher tax rate on Jews in some communities
3. Attacks on Jewish character and characteristics by writers such as Shakespeare
4. Jews not as heavily devastated by diseases as non-Jews

a. Communities segregated from others
b. Greater emphasis on cleaniness

C. Jews had greater economic opportunity in urban settings

1. Greater emphasis on education in Jewish families
2. Education transferred into business involvement

D. To the public, Jews appear to profit from European wars

1. High cost of goods during European wars
2. Seldom involved militarily

II. Phase One: Persecution of Jews using the Established Legal Framework, 1933-1938

A. Goals

1. Removal of Jews from political, educational, and business positions:

   a. Removal promotes increased opportunity for non-Jewish Germans
   b. Reduces Jewish influence in, or opposition to, development of Nazi state

2. Purify German society through "Aryanization"

   a. Homogeneity of population promotes national unity behind government policies
   b. Reinforcement of racial, cultural, and national pride

3. Strip German Jews of national identity

   a. Jews acquire status of national "guests"
   b. Jews become subject to executive order rather than established legal process
   c. "Guest Status" allows for deportation in future

B. Legal Tactics

1. Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (7 April, 1933)

   a. Non-Aryan civil servants to be retired
   b. Only non-Aryans to be employed

2. Law Regarding Admission to the Bar (7 April, 1933): non-Aryans prohibitted from admission to the bar

3. Law Against the Crowding of German Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning (25 April, 1933): reduction in number of non-Aryan students and faculty

4. The Nuremburg Laws

   a. Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor (15 Sept., 1935)

      1. Prohibits marriage of Jew and subjects of German blood
      2. Restricts extramarital intercourse between Jews and persons of German blood

b. Reich Citizenship Law (15 Sept., 1935): identifies citizens as persons without Jewish ancestors
c. First Degree to the Reich Citizenship Law (14 Nov., 1935)

1. Jews lose German citizenship and accompanying rights
2. Establishes biological criteria for determining Jewish identify

5. Additional regulations enacted by the Nazi state

a. School curriculum emphasis on racial identification and negative role of Jews in German history
b. Public identification of Jews required and curtailment of religious activities

1. Religious services prohibited
2. Jews must wear armbands with the star of David
3. Jewish property marked in plain sight

c. Books written by Jews, or by persons sympathetic to Jews, are burned

d. Jews cannot inherit property or receive public relief, and are assessed a 25% tax on all personal property upon emigration

6. Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps open to house opponents of Nazism and non-compliant Jews

III. Phase Two: Intensification of Jewish Persecution by Legal and Extra-legal Means: 1938-1940

A. Goals

1. Strength gains made under Phase One
2. Reduce Hitler's fears of conspiracy

B. Kristallnacht: Crystal Night (Night of Broken Glass) Nov. 9-10, 1938

1. Nov. 7: Herschel Grynszpan assassinates Ernst von Rath, Third Secretary of the German Embassy in Paris
2. Anti-Jewish riots erupt with Hitler's blessing

a. Jews publicity beaten and killed
b. 191 synagogues destroyed
c. 7,500 Jewish shops looted and/or destroyed
d. 26,000 Jews arrested and sent to concentration camps

C. All Jewish children expelled from public schools - Nov. 15, 1938

D. "Decree on Aryanization" (Dec. 13, 1938): expropriation of all Jewish mears of business

E. Creation of segregated communities for Jews in Germany and occupied Poland

1. Ghettoes
2. Physically walled in, little food, strict guard

F. Third Reich considers Madagascar Plan

1. Remove all Jews to new land outside of Europe
2. Plan suggests the island of Madagascar - off southern coast of Africa-------as site for relocation
3. Plan never materializes

G. Public executions of Jews increase

H. Personal property is confiscated

I. Starvation of Jews in communities and ghettoes

IV. Phase III: Physical Destruction of European Jews; 1941-1945. (Conducted by Himmler's SS)

A. Goal

1. Physically eliminate European Jewry
2. Purify Aryan culture and ensure dominance
3. Prevent another "stab in the back" by Jews as Hitler claimed happened to Germany during World War One.

B. The Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units)

1. Objective: destroy Jewish communities and population in Eastern Europe
2. Method:

a. Four battalions of select soldiers

1. Total of 3,000 men, combined

2. Each battalion assigned one specific region of Poland, and later western Russia

b. Lightweight in armaments for speed
c. Round-up of Jews in each community

1. Taken to area away from public view
2. Prisoners executed-regardless of age or sex
   a. Shot in head
   b. Bodies piled in trenches

3. Results

a. 1.5 million Jews murdered by end of 1942
b. Commanders and Actions
   1. Olto Ohlendorf: responsible for 90,000 deaths
   2. Otto Fischer: responsible for 15,000 deaths
   3. 35,000 killed at Babi Yar ravine near Kiev
   4. 14,000 killed at Kharkov

C. Wansee Conference (January 20, 1942)

1. Establishes extermination of Jews as official governmental policy - "Final Solution"

2. Reinhard Heydrick placed in charge
3. Concentration camps to be converted to extermination centers and new facilities also to be created

D. Deportation of Jews from all occupied areas and ghettoes begin - taken to death centers

E. Death Camps

1. Most located in Poland though some in Germany

2. Arrivals divided into two groups - life or death

3. Those selected to live become laborers and objects of scientific experimentation

a. Head shaved
b. Tatooed
c. Given lightweight clothing
d. Overcrowded barracks
e. Extremely high death rate--starvation, weather, disease

4. Those selected for death

   a. Poisoned with Zyklon B gas in special chambers
   b. Bodies destroyed by fire or in crematorium
   c. Auschwitz averages 2,000 executions per day until early 1945

F. By May, 1945, nearly 6,000,000 Jews and 5,000,000 gypsies, homosexuals, Poles, and persons of Slavic descent have been executed

G. Liberation of death camps expose to the world the horrors of Nazi actions and intentions of Hitler.

H. Question of responsibility emerges

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